

# 1 Executive Summary

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## 1.1 Vision Statement

The City of Eastlake will encourage smart, sustainable economic growth and provide quality services to the residents and businesses, while building upon the competitive advantage provided by its environmental and physical attributes, thus creating a desirable location to live, work and play in the coming decades.

## 1.2 Major Recommendations

The following items represent important action item issues identified by the Economic and Community Development Council (ECDC), previous planning documents and the Lake County Planning Commission. Additional details and maps are included in subsequent sections of the plan.

### A. Incorporate New Planning, Zoning and Design Tools (Chapter 11)

The development, or redevelopment, of a community is a fluid process. Technology, planning strategies, design standards, zoning techniques and internal departmental procedures must be constantly examined and modified when necessary to effectively manage growth in a smart, sustainable manner.

Recommended strategies:

- Evaluate Part Eleven – “Planning and Zoning Code” of the Codified Ordinances annually.
  - Review all permitted uses in all commercial and industrial districts. Similar to countless other ordinances, Eastlake’s zoning ordinance contains land uses/business activities that are no longer appropriate for the City. These uses should be removed and emerging land uses should be added to the ordinance to “keep pace” with the development community.
  - Evaluate the permitted uses in the Lakeshore Development District (LSDD). The permitted uses should be a reflection of the purpose statement of each zone. Currently, this zone nearly identical to the Retail Business (B-1) zone and may not achieve the goals of the LSDD. Uses shall reflect the maritime nature of the area.
  - Examine lot size requirements in all non-residential zones. Consider minimal sizes and allow the development standards to dictate the size of the lot (landscaping, impervious surface requirements, parking, stormwater management, buffers).

- Consolidate uses into a comprehensive land use matrix. A matrix allows the location of uses to be compared across all districts.
- Eliminate the repetition of uses in multiple districts or consider consolidating zoning districts that are no longer necessary. For example, the General Business (B-2) zone is very similar to the B-1 and the Limited Industrial (M-2) and General Industrial (M-3) is essentially the same district.
- Utilize graphics in the ordinance to visually illustrate design standards (i.e. what does a façade base treatment look like) or how development standards are applied (i.e. rear yard setback on an irregular shaped lot).
- Create purpose statements for industrial districts. *“If you don’t know where you’re going, how will you get there?”* This statement holds true for land use and zoning projections over the long term. Creating the purpose statement is the first step in shaping the zoning ordinance. Similar to the mission statement of a Fortune 500 company, this statement is the umbrella under which the remainder of the zoning code should be created and administered.
- Streamline the development review process to encourage the participation of the private sector. In short, keep it simple.
- Exempt existing businesses from the development/design guideline standards until the property redevelops. The City and this plan must be cognizant of the potential impacts to current businesses and understand that substantial change will occur gradually over an extended period of time. Standards for adherence to design standards should be established for:
  - When a structure is remodeled (i.e. if the addition exceeds 25% of the existing square footage, then the addition must adhere to the guidelines).
  - When there is a change in ownership *and* the building is not used for over a year.
  - When a change in use occurs
- Reduce the required minimum lot size in the M-1 district to 1 acre.
- Consider mixed use zoning or overlay zoning on remaining vacant or infill (redevelopment) parcels.
  - *Mixed use zoning* encourages complete neighborhoods through the combination of commercial, residential, service and office activities on a single development site. This

method de-emphasizes land use regulations and instead permits multiple uses subject to specific design standards. Traditionally used in downtown areas, more suburban-type communities are embracing this strategy (Easton Town Center-Columbus, First and Main-Hudson).

*Overlay zoning* addresses unique siting, use and compatibility issues that require use and development regulations in addition to those found in the underlying zoning district. According to the “21<sup>st</sup> Century Land Development Code,” If any regulation in an overlay zoning district requires lower densities, greater setbacks, or otherwise imposes greater standards than those required by the base zoning district, the more restrictive standards applies.

Both tools were identified in previous plans and would be applicable along the Vine Street corridor to encourage redevelopment of small-scale retail and residential uses in predefined areas. A mixed use zone is encouraged for the eventual development of the southeast corner of the SR 91/Vine Street intersection. A special Auto Row overlay should be considered for the eastern portion of the Vine Street corridor.

- Establish fair, uniform commercial design guidelines per “Vine Street 2020” and “Eastlake Comprehensive Plan 1991”. National chains establishing a location in an area with no architectural regulations will usually build a default “prototype” building. Such buildings usually have little architectural detailing, and are designed to reinforce corporate identity and function as a sign, regardless of its compatibility with community character. National corporations will forego their “prototype” buildings and build a structure that better respects local character – but only if they are required to do so.
  - Effective design guidelines establish an overall standard of physical design quality and “protect private property owners from sub-standard design decisions on neighboring properties or in the public realm that could have a negative impact on property values in the area.” (“Vine Street 2020”, Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio, 2003.)

Specific design items include: Façade base treatments, window fenestration, specific building materials/colors, signage, crosswalks, reduced parking requirements, pedestrian accommodations, and improved landscaping requirements that incorporate best management practices.

- Require planning, architectural, and zoning boards to participate in regional planning activities and training seminars.

- The majority of local planning, zoning or architectural boards are comprised of volunteer citizen planners with limited knowledge of the topic they are asked to approve (or disapprove). It is important for communities to provide, or perhaps require, educational opportunities for those willing to serve because they play an important role in decisions that may effect the natural and built environment.

The City should also provide technical staff (Chief Building Officer, City Engineer, Zoning Inspector, Planner) support during the decision making process as the applicant may have multiple technical consultants available to present their application.

The Lake County Planning Commission, Ohio Planning Conference and American Planning Association offer countless low cost education opportunities on a variety of timely topics.

- Consider planning/zoning staff in long term budget considerations.
  - Planning is often a reactionary decision in many communities because of lack of staffing. Understandably, engineering and zoning / building inspectors are necessary to regulate the events of the day, but long-term planning, design, development scenarios are equally important to the overall vision of the City. Planning staff can also guide boards and commissions during the decision making process, prepare staff reports for elected officials and represent the City on regional boards and agencies.
- Continue participation in the Chagrin River Watershed Balanced Growth Program, in conjunction with Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Inc. (CRWP).
  - Communities endorsing the locally designated Priority Development Areas (PDAs) and Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) will be recognized by the State as participating in the Chagrin River Balanced Growth Plan. In Eastlake, the PDA's include:
    - Existing industrial and retail areas
    - Expansion of more intense development along the Vine Street corridor and the JFK property.
    - Possible locations for more intense development near the lakeshore and Chagrin River.

The PCA's include:

- Environmentally sensitive areas (riparian corridors and wetland areas)

- Scenic and recreational opportunities on the Chagrin River and access to Lake Erie.
- This participation has a number of benefits to local communities including:
  - Increased state assistance for local projects.
  - Support for local zoning.
  - Additional state incentives, such as points on grant applications and lower interest rates on state loan programs.
  - General local benefits, including minimizing long-term infrastructure and stormwater management costs and advancing the preservation of the key natural areas in the city.

#### B. Continued Growth of Open Space / Riparian Network (Chapter 4, 10)

Parks and Recreation areas are increasingly important in today's environment. While the population has been growing at slow to moderate rate, land consumption is growing at an disproportional rate. With this growth people need more space to spend with friends and family, to enjoy natural surroundings, and relax from the outside stressors of modern society.

Natural and environmental resources will help define the character of the City, support the natural systems that provide for wildlife and a healthy environment, provide recreational and educational opportunities, and form the basis of an emerging tourist economy with a renewed interest in local waterfront amenities.

In Eastlake, the Chagrin River (and its tributaries) and Lake Erie waterfront provide much needed open space and provide an indirect development control. Efforts to preserve additional waterfront properties and link existing facilities cannot be overstated as development pressures will look to consume these properties.

Recommended strategies:

- The City should use this plan as the basis to create an official open space, trail and recreational capital improvement plan, and work with the Lake Metroparks and adjacent communities to ensure consistency in open space planning.
- Continue to actively participate in with the Lake County Coastal Plan Committee.
  - The City and the Port Authority has received substantial financial assistance through their ability to partner with county/regional organizations.
- Focus on acquisition (or conservation easements) of properties designated as Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs).

- Where areas (Woodlands area) exhibit future development potential, require an open space or preservation component of the most sensitive areas are found (floodway).
- Link Chagrin River Park to Lake Erie and create public access points.
  - Chagrin River Park (283 acres) is one of the more highly utilized parks in the Lake Metropark system. Actively pursue access rights or easements to this park for a riverfront trail from the Eastlake/Willoughby border to a new lakefront pier.
  - Long-term trail connections may link the Syracuse Property and the Ward Creek corridor.
- Develop riparian setbacks along the Chagrin River and other designated watercourses.
  - Riparian setbacks are a zoning tool, (similar to the front, side and rear yard setbacks) used to establish distances from water resources where building and other soil disturbing activities are prohibited, thus protecting the natural function of the watercourse. This includes reducing flood damages, filtering pollutants, stabilizing stream banks, providing natural habitat and enhancing community character.
- Create a harbor of refuge at the mouth of the Chagrin River.
  - The Lake County Coastal Development Plan identifies the Chagrin River mouth as a priority project site for a protected recreational harbor of refuge. This would be an ideal location between Mentor Harbor and downtown Cleveland. There are approximately 1,000 recreational boaters in the Chagrin River corridor during the boating season.

### C. Redevelopment of Commercial Corridors (Vine Street)

The 1.5 mile Vine Street corridor is the heart the commercial/retail center of Eastlake and the area most people associate with City's identity. Similar to other northeast Ohio suburbs, Eastlake faces challenges reinventing this core area in the face of continued suburban commercial expansion in adjacent communities. The "strip" form of commercial development prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s is becoming obsolete due to market conditions, consumer preference and retail saturation. Many communities are looking to transform these areas into town centers, urban boulevards and/or residential areas (Zoning News, February 2002).

These topics have been addressed by the Economic Development Committee and were addressed in the 1991 "Eastlake Comprehensive Plan" and were the genesis for the "Vine Street 2020" plan.

While road improvements have been made along the corridor since 1991, multiple issues remain unresolved. Recommended strategies include:

- Implement structural design standards and landscaping requirements for new development or redevelopment as established in “Vine Street 2020.”
- Increase the depths of the B-1 areas along the north side not to exceed 1,000’ to create more attractive commercial areas for site selectors. This will also create the opportunity for true mixed use development that includes residential condominiums.
- Tighten the permitted uses in the B-1 zone to reflect a true retail/commercial area.
- Examine the parking standards in the B-1 zone (Chagrin River Watershed Partners has model ordinances and technical resources available).
  - Consider parking maximums as opposed to minimums.
  - Permit land banking for future parking areas on site if demand warrants.
  - Require shared parking between parcels or businesses.
  - Improve overall design standards of lots.
    - Incorporate compact car spaces
    - Minimize stall dimensions
    - Require the use of pervious surface in overflow and other low traffic areas.
    - Incorporate bioretention areas and landscaping requirements.
- Review access management issues throughout the corridor.
  - Limit the amount of new curb cuts along Vine Street.
  - Examine the amount of feeder intersections with Vine Street and consider eliminating intersections at E. 342, 346, 349 or 351. This should be done in cooperation with local safety forces and in conjunction with the potential extension of Jennison Drive.
  - Require internal connections, unified circulation and parking plans between adjacent properties.
  - Consider rearage and frontage roads to serve as a common access drive for properties along the corridor. The extension of Jennison Drive is one example.
- Create an overlay zone to permit residential in the B-1 areas subject to strict development/design standards. Consider moderate to high density residential uses to the east of Classic Park.
- Rezone the southwest corner of SR 91 and Vine Street to create a mixed use neighborhood that capitalizes on its proximity to Classic Park and SR 2.
- Require underground utilities for large-scale development projects.

#### **D. Create a ‘Destination’ Reputation Based on Entertainment, Sports and Tourism**

Eastlake has three underutilized amenities that provide a competitive advantage over every community in Lake County; Classic Park, Chagrin River and Lake Erie. Independently unique in many ways, the ability to bring outside investment to the City is the unifying factor.

- **Classic Park** serves as the identifiable feature of the city and should serve as the anchor tenant of the Vine Street/SR 91 intersection. Recent efforts to attract non-baseball activities to the facility are commendable and should be continued.

The City should pursue options to attract (pre-game) and retain (post-game) visitors to local business surrounding the stadium. While the pedestrian bridge linking the parking lot (northwest corner of Vine Street/SR 91) to the stadium provides a convenient parking and safe access option, it also serves as a traffic funnel in and out of the area. Game after game, thousands of people and hundreds of cars quickly exit the area after an event without even passing by a local business.

Understanding the parking requirements of Classic Park, the City and franchise may want to consider a phased in development plan for the large parking lot to capture the built in customer base afforded by the ball game or special event.

Parking lot design ideas include:

- Horizontal parking (which consumes valuable land) should be replaced with vertical parking terraces which could still tie into the pedestrian bridge.
- Work with site selectors to promote a future high density mixed use structure to be connected to the pedestrian bridge.
- Create an active mixed use neighborhood with dedicated open space and pedestrian accommodations.
- Incorporate a comprehensive landscape management plan. The current site lacks any indication of “curb appeal.”

This is a challenging issue worth examining in greater detail.

- The **Chagrin River** is one of the most underutilized assets in Eastlake. Within the City limits the river is bounded by two highly attractive nodes; the Chagrin River Park to the south and the recreational boating channels to the north. It is identified in the “Lake County Coastal Development Plan” and “Landside Communities Master Plan” as a key destination point.

More specifically, the plans identify:



- Future bike paths and pedestrian corridors along the entire river terminating at the lake. The City should continue dialogue with the City of Willoughby and Lake Metroparks to achieve this goal. Chagrin River Park is an example of the drawing power of a water feature. It is estimated this park attracts over 200,000 annually.
- The construction of a recreational safe harbor through a series of staggered off shore barrier islands off the mouth of the river.
- Multi-functioning pier with transient docks and enhanced public space at waters edge.
- Preservation of the river islands as a nature preserve. These privately owned islands should be purchased and preserved as public lands, protecting the native vegetation and wildlife and allowing for limited pedestrian access. Minimally invasive raised walkways and interpretative signage could be installed on the island to enable people to explore the island without disturbing the natural setting.
- Look out towers to capitalize on unique topography
- Mixed use development west of Lakeshore Blvd. bridge in areas designated as PDA's that capitalize on the maritime attributes of the area.
- Terraced development overlooking the river valley along the Lakeshore Blvd. corridor.
- **Lake Erie** public access is minimal due to the First Energy Power Plant and the historical residential development pattern. There is a small open space area and fishing pier at the terminus of Erie Rd. and a small piece of city owned land near the confluence of the original channel and lake confluence.

The acquisition of additional lakefront parcels may not be feasible, but the City should continue to work toward linking Chagrin River Park to the islands and ultimately the lake.

A more prominent entry to Eastlake should be established that leads people from Classic Park to the lake and riverfront areas. This could be accomplished through a unique landscaping, strategy, signage or way finding program. Currently, visitors and most citizens are not aware of the beauty of the city's natural features.

#### E. Focus on the Economic Vitality Areas

In 2006-07, the ECDC created a list of economic vitality categories ranging from general ideas to site specific topics or locations. Each topic was examined during the planning process and discussed in greater detail in Chapter 10.

This plan recommends priority is given to these issues, where feasible. Areas/topics include:

1. High density/multi-family development

Traditionally, multi-family zoning serves as a ‘transition’ between commercial and single family land uses. More recently, residential land uses have been included into new mixed used developments or incorporated into the redevelopment of existing commercial areas. Both of these scenarios exist in Eastlake.

In areas with unique environmental attributes, increased density is achieved through the preservation of a percentage of open space based on provisions of the ordinance (wetlands, steep slopes, riparian).

Additional considerations for appropriate multi-family/high density residential development should include:

- Proximity to public transit
- Public infrastructure capacity
- Impact of surrounding land use pattern (noise, traffic, storm water)
- Impact on environmental features
- Access to arterials/collector roads to minimize traffic volumes on local residential streets.

*Preferred areas: Lakeshore Ridge Area, north side of Vine Street between Hulett and SR 91, and south side of Vine Street (opposite Waverly, Woodlands (with open space requirements))*

2. Increase industrial base

Today’s manufacturing/industrial practices are vastly different than those of the post WWII era. As opposed to smokestack industry, these sectors identify themselves as clean businesses with a focus on CNC machinery, medical supplies and biosciences. As such, new businesses may not require the large development standards (lot size, frontage) found in Eastlake’s code. This plan recommends the pursuit of new light industrial trades with a focus on bio-medical and alternative energy.

*Preferred areas: JFK area, Research Drive*

3. Recreational areas/preserve natural areas

Provide increased opportunities for recreational activities in the City, predominately along the waterfronts, and link existing amenities along the Chagrin River corridor to create a destination based economic asset.

*Preferred areas: Ward Creek corridor, Syracuse Property, Chagrin River, Lake Erie coastline.*

#### 4. Commercial development standards

Design Standards are an effective tool to help shape the appearance and function of the built environment. Design guidelines should contain appropriate examples and graphics to accurately portray the style and type of commercial development desired by Eastlake. The standards should be flexible enough to accommodate small-scale retail and big box development.

*Preferred areas: Vine Street Corridor*

#### 5. Mixed-use zones / entertainment district

Mixed-used zoning is often found in urban core areas (Cleveland) and small community downtown areas (Willoughby, Madison Village, Hudson, Chagrin Falls). Over the past decade, suburban communities have successfully adopted modified versions of mixed-used zoning in an attempt to provide similar town center development patterns. Examples can be found in Hudson, Columbus, Westlake, Lyndhurst and Green (near Dayton).

General characteristics of mixed-use zoning include:

- Permissive ordinance that allows residential (typically at a higher density than found in the community), business and recreational uses on a single development plan.
- Elevated design standards to create a unique sense of place.
- Accommodations for pedestrian mobility throughout development.
- Increased building height standards to create buildings with unique character.
- Relaxed setback and parking provisions

*Preferred areas: Vineyards, NE corner of Vine and SR 91, Classic Park Parking lot, Lakeshore Ridge Area*

#### 6. Senior/assisted living areas

The area between Waverly and Hulett continues to remain an attractive place to encourage senior care facilities. A walkable senior community would be beneficial to the local businesses in the area. The current SC (Senior Care) zoning should be expanded to accommodate future growth of the senior demographic.

#### 7. JFK property (see #2)

#### 8. Woodlands area/Ridge area (along Lakeshore Blvd) (see #1,5)

#### 9. Vine Street/Classic Park area (See #1,4,5).